

United States Senate

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December 6, 2005

The Honorable Ted Stevens
Chairman
Senate Commerce Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Co-Chairman
Senate Commerce Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Stevens and Co-Chairman Inouye:

As you know, yesterday, the 9/11 Commission report card showed that, over four years after the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the United States is still ill-prepared for a terrorist attack. Few of the Commission's recommendations have been implemented.

One of the key concerns is interoperable communications – enabling first responders to communicate with each other during an emergency.

I know that this issue is of concern to you, and I thank you for holding a hearing in September on the issue. I also appreciate your work on establishing a firm transition date to digital television, which will free spectrum for first responders, and your willingness to use part of the proceeds from the spectrum auction to create an interoperability fund.

However, what we have done so far is not enough. The Commerce Committee needs to continue to address this matter in the first markup next year.

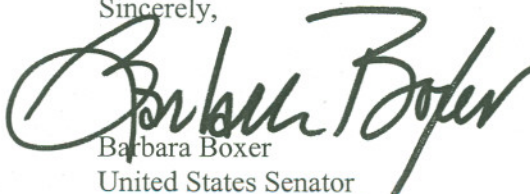
First, we need to guarantee our first responders gain access to the spectrum they so desperately need. To do that, we need a DTV transition bill that will provide the details and assurances necessary to guarantee that the transition is not delayed.

Second, while some of the proceeds of the spectrum auction will go into an interoperability fund, further legislation is needed to ensure that this funding actually gets to our local first responders – and is provided in an appropriate, efficient, and effective manner.

For the sake of our first responders – and the safety of all of the American people – we must continue our work in this area.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator

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December 6, 2005

The Honorable Michael Chertoff
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As you know, the 9/11 Commission issued a report card on the recommendations it issued nearly a year and a half ago. Few parents would be pleased to see their kids get the grades handed out today.


Specifically, the 9/11 Commission gave "checked bag and cargo screening" a D grade. Such a dismal showing makes it even more imperative to have airlines equipped with blast resistant cargo containers, so that an explosion will be contained in the cargo hold of a passenger plane. In fact, the 9/11 Commission recommended that "TSA should require that every passenger aircraft carrying cargo must deploy at least one hardened container to carry any suspect cargo."

One year ago, as part of the National Intelligence Reform Act, TSA was required to implement a pilot program regarding blast resistant cargo containers. Given the urgency of the matter, please send me your timetable for putting in place a requirement that blast resistant cargo containers be used on every plane.

At a time when our protections against a terrorist attack are still inadequate, we must move quickly to ensure that all security measures are in place to protect the American public.

I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator